SPAWAR Leadership Highlights Pushing Information to the Fleet

BY: Andrea V. Houck

SAN DIEGO – Navy Rear Adm. Will Rodriguez, acting SPAWAR Commander, and Dennis Bauman, the Navy's Program Executive Officer for C4I and Space, emphasized the power of information dissemination to the fleet during a panel discussion Jan. 11 at the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) West 2006 conference.

Retired Navy Vice Adm. Herb Browne, AFCEA International President and Chief Executive Officer, moderates the Jan. 11 luncheon panel on the topic of "Information Technology Challenges - How Do We Get the Right Information Technology to the Warfighter?" Panelists are (left) Navy Rear Adm. Will Rodriguez, acting SPAWAR Commander; Dennis Bauman, PEO C4I and Space; Marine Corps Col. Robert Baker, NMCI Technical Director; and David Wennergren, the Navy's Chief Information Officer.

Additional panelists speaking on the topic of "Information Technology Challenges - How Do We Get the Right Information Technology to the Warfighter?" were David Wennergren, Department of the Navy Chief Information Officer; Marine Corps Col. Robert Baker, Navy / Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI) Technical Director; and moderator, retired Navy Vice Adm. Herb Browne, AFCEA International President and Chief Executive Officer.

While discussing the Joint Tactical Radio System's (JTRS) technological developments, Bauman said his main challenge is that JTRS has evolved from a legacy radio replacement program to a mobile "ad-hoc" networking capability. The requirements scope is so large that it extends beyond the national budget, according to Bauman.

Rodriguez explained how last year's Trident Warrior exercise demonstrated coalition tools and networking. He also highlighted the importance of incorporating human systems integration and information management with this exercise.

"It's about the knowledge, and it's about the whole spectrum of solutions," said Rodriguez.

Wennergren discussed mission assurance on the network. "It is a web services world," he declared.

He further warned that legacy applications and networks are the most permeable, security threats in the system. Wennergren said that security might be the biggest reason to remove legacy systems in their entirety.

According to Wennergren, the world of wireless is here, and the military should not be afraid of it. He also called for performance-based contracting and strong adoption of standards. Military and academia must unite to capitalize on commercial solutions and best practices, he said.

Baker listed several NMCI advancements that include development of a wireless pilot with layer II encryption, an embedded cellular card that will enable laptops to access the commercial network for a fixed monthly rate and a service for broadband unclassified remote access.

"Driving out complexity is the best thing we can do for the warfighter," exclaimed Baker.

Dr. Linton Wells II, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks and Information Integration, delivered the luncheon keynote address just prior to the panel discussion. Wells gave the audience a preview of the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) with his focus on information technology and systems.

Wells said that the upcoming QDR is extraordinarily supportive of net-centricity, which is not just for operations but also for business and intelligence in the defense arena. Operationally, the network must be extended to the tactical edge to create a robustly networked force that will exchange information for better situational awareness.

West 2006 was one of the largest West Coast events for communications, electronics, intelligence, information systems, imaging, military weapon systems, aviation and shipbuilding. AFCEA and the U.S. Naval Institute sponsored the three-day event. It hosted several panels in which expert speakers discussed challenges and changes facing the armed forces.

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